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courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06JEDDAH478, INTERNET SHOWING GRASSROOTS DISSENTION ABOUT

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#06JEDDAH478.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06JEDDAH478	2006-07-15 14:35	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Consulate Jeddah

Appears in these articles:

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VZCZCXRO9803
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FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9341
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1474
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1552
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 6669
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000478

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHARAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP AND
AMBASSADOR JOHN HANFORD; LONDON FOR TSOU; PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2031

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SUBJECT: INTERNET SHOWING GRASSROOTS DISSENTION ABOUT
OFFICIAL SAUDI POSITION ON LEBANON

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Public opinion is divided regarding the July 14 Saudi Press Agency statement on the situation in Lebanon. While local newspapers have reported the government line, websites show a wide variety of opinions that both support and attack the position. Those who support the statement generally are opposed to Hizballah and have praised the Saudi government's stand, while those who hold stronger anti-Israeli views have labeled it as being "cowardly" and "weak." Initial press reports show that Saudi clerics seem to have avoided the issue during their weekly Friday sermons. ConGenOffs will be following up with religious scholars in Jeddah to further assess the views of the religious community. END SUMMARY.

THE INTERNET

2. (SBU) Although Saudi Arabian press has remained in step with the July 14 official Saudi Press Agency statement regarding the situation between Israel and Lebanon,

grassroots reactions are showing broad differences of opinion. Several websites in the Kingdom, including the fundamentalist "Al Saha" and more moderate "AlQuma" pages, have become outlets for a wide range of opinions, many of whom conflict with the official Saudi position. Hits on those websites have sky-rocketed, according to counters listed on the webpages, with more than 22000 hits on Al Saha in the first 24 hours after the release of the statement.

13. (U) Grassroots anger toward the government has been fueled by what many are calling a surprisingly weak government position vis a vis Israel and Lebanon. The official statement, which opponents claim contradicts itself, begins by noting that the Kingdom supports "the right of people under occupation to fight this occupation in all its forms" and maintains support for "legitimate Palestinian resistance which aims at resisting military occupation and avoiding harming the innocent." However, in later sections, the official missive said that with respect to "the bloody, painful events currently taking place in Palestine and Lebanon, the Kingdom would like to clearly announce that a difference should be drawn between legitimate resistance and miscalculated adventures carried out by elements inside the state and those behind them without consultation with the legitimate authority in their state and without consultation or coordination with Arab countries, thus creating a gravely dangerous situation exposing all Arab countries and their achievements to destruction with those countries having no say."

14. (U) The website posters who support the government's statement have voiced strong anti-Hizballah views, praising the Saudi government and noting that "Hizballah made a mistake and Lebanon is paying for it." Others seem to be using self-preservation and anti-Shia views as the basis for their opinions. For example, according to one anonymous writer, "we should concentrate on our own welfare and well-being;" adding that the government has finally "learned from our old mistakes and (is) aiming for the future." Another poster criticized Hizballah saying it "was planted by the Iranian revolution" and "If we don't stop them now, they will spread all over our region."

15. (U) Much stronger views have emerged from those who see poor leadership at the root of the Kingdom's official position. Many posters have described the government statement as "cowardly" and "weak", with one writer even calling it a "scandal on all aspects" and daring to suggest that "we should prosecute whoever was in charge of issuing this statement at this critical time." Another anonymous poster added that "the statement clearly indicates how weak our leaders are. Our leaders are obviously following instructions from the West."

16. (U) Some website postings have addressed what they view as inappropriate changes in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. For instance, one writer claimed that the statement used "new language" to address regional connections and claimed that because "it came out so quickly and prematurely condemned Hizballah more than the Israelis" the statement was really

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"more of an American position supporting Jews than an Arabic position."

CLERICS

17. (C) As an interesting counterpoint to the internet activity, Saudi clerics seem to have avoided discussing their political views regarding the Lebanon crisis during this week's Friday mosque sermons. Initial press reports of the sermons from clerics in Mecca and Medina reflect no mention of the hostilities in Lebanon or of Israel. That omission has also been a target for internet posters, who have criticized the religious community for overlooking such an important issue. NOTE: ConGenOffs plan to meet with several religious scholars in Jeddah during the next few days and will report on their views, as available. END NOTE.

18. (C) COMMENT: Although internet criticism is not uncommon in Saudi Arabia because of the anonymity it offers, these postings are examples of the continuing divide between the government and the views of the general Saudi populace. END COMMENT.
Gfoeller